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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000418

SIPDIS

CENTCOM AND EUCOM: PLEASE PASS TO POLADS AND J-5

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/10/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH GENERAL STAFF WARNS GOVERNMENT

REF: A. 02 ANKARA 8873

[B](#). 02 ANKARA 8252

[C](#). 02 ANKARA 9051

[D](#). 02 ANKARA 7682

[E](#). IIR 2 193 0016 03

(U) Classified by Ambassador W. Robert Pearson.

Reasons:1.5(b)(d)

[1](#). (C) Summary: TGS Chief Ozkok's Jan. 8 prepared statement to assembled media reps: 1) reprimanded AK government's alleged support for Islamic "reactionaries" and AK's softer line on Cyprus; 2) denied that the military opposes AK's pursuit of EU membership; and 3) noted that while the military will conduct Iraq policies pursuant to a "political decision," Turkey "is considering various alternatives" (i.e., unilateral "humanitarian" intervention in N. Iraq). Party, press, and political observer contacts tell us the statement aims to clip AK's wings and signals further pressure by the State against the elected government, reminiscent of previous military-civilian tensions and orchestrated downfall of Islamist-led government in 1997. End summary.

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A Clear Statement...  
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[2](#). (C) At the Jan. 8 reception hosted by the Turkish General Staff for some 250 media reps, TGS Chief Gen. Ozkok, flanked by Deputy Chief Gen. Buyukanit, delivered a prepared speech that a broad range of contacts describe as a "harsh and blunt" warning to the AK (Justice and Development) Party government. Ozkok's speech is seen as a warning shot calling on AK government to cease pursuing policies allegedly at odds with the principles of the Kemalist Republic. Separately, a major media mogul and three leading journalists (a prominent columnist for "Hurriyet," a senior columnist until recently with "Yeni Safak," and a correspondent for "Janes' Defense Weekly") who attended told us that Ozkok asserted:

-- Prime Minister Gul is encouraging Islamic fundamentalism by voicing reservations about the recent Supreme Military Council (YAS) decision to expel alleged "reactionaries" from the ranks. Moreover, the Army "will not tolerate" the wearing of the (Islamic) headscarf "as a political symbol against the basic principles of the Republic";

-- Cyprus is very important to Turkish security, and a solution to Cyprus that does not meet Turkey's security interests will confine Turkey to Anatolia and obstruct its links to the world (Note: as reported in ref C, AK views "TRNC" leader Denktas, who has strong ties to the Ankara Establishment, as an obstacle to reform and is trying to undermine him politically. End note);

-- the Army is not against Turkey's EU entry bid, but does not want to sacrifice "Turkish honor" in the process;

-- while the military will conduct Iraq policies pursuant to a "political decision," Turkey "is considering various alternatives" should war become unavoidable.

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...And Clear "Warning" to AK  
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[3](#). (C) Using the same words as our journalist contacts, and drawing attention to the same aspects of Ozkok's speech, some Jan. 9 headlines in the mainstream press described the affair as being "like a memorandum" ("Muhtira Gibi") -- precisely to

suggest a parallel between Ozkok's remarks and the 1971 "Coup by Memorandum" ("Muhtira") against then-P.M. Demirel. Our journalist and political contacts tell us that Ozkok's statement is widely understood as a warning to AK and a veiled threat of further pressure against the government should it continue to pursue policies at odds with the status quo. According to a senior journalist in attendance, Ozkok was setting down a marker, telling the AK Government that the TGS is calling the shots on the major political and security issues. The owner-CEO of a major media conglomerate characterized the warning as the strongest since the military's "February 28 Process" in 1997 that ousted the Islamist Erbakan Government. He opined that Ozkok is facing strong pressure from his colleagues and subordinates and was essentially forced to speak out publicly -- "while the rest of the officer corps watched and listened."

14. (C) In its role as standard-bearer for the Establishment, opposition CHP (Republican People's Party) is telling us privately of its "severe discomfort" at AK's moves to accord official respect for the headscarf. Senior CHP M.P. Bulent Tanla asserted to Jan. 9 that Ozkok is thus "perfectly within his rights" to express his disapproval, adding that "this is bad for P.M. Gul."

15. (C) Meanwhile, some of our general-officer contacts aver that the military is not trying to bring AK down, but merely wants the civilian government to shoulder the responsibility to make national security decisions. They assert that the Jan. 13 decision to allow resumption of mil-mil discussions of Iraq-related activities reflects a move to a commonality of view between the military and government. According to press reporting on the "surprise" Gul-Ozkok meeting Jan. 13, the government and the military "are in full agreement on the need for a 'warless' solution in Iraq" -- a report which seems to contradict earlier assertions by TGS Deputy Chief Buyukanit that the military leadership was irritated at AK for dragging its feet on Iraq. As reported in Ref E, while many officers are indeed eager to side with the USG, other more senior figures are content with the delay.

16. (C) Privately, AK tells a different story, one more along the lines offered to us by contacts across the political spectrum. Jan. 9, party Vice Chairman for political and legal affairs Firat charged that the military is trying to force AK into decisions that will leave the party exposed to the ire of the voters if it supports an operation against Saddam -- but that AK does not want to wear the jacket for the generals. Jan. 14, Firat returned to the theme, declaring to us that the military and its bureaucratic allies are using Iraq and Cyprus to: 1) warn the AK Party/Government to toe the line; and thus 2) to reassert the superiority of the State over elected civilians. Referring to public allegations that the Gul Government is "indecisive" on pressing security issues, Firat asked rhetorically whether the Embassy really believes that "military decisions in Turkey are made by the civilians?"

17. (C) Our journalist contacts offered a similar view: the TGS wants the government to make a political decision along the lines essentially to be dictated by the TGS. Regarding Iraq, they also characterize Turkish military activity on both sides of the Turkey-Iraq border as a signal that the TGS refuses to be limited to what the government, the Kurds, or the USG wants regarding policy matters traditionally dominated by the TGS.

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Comment  
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18. (C) Ten days before the national election last Nov. 3, the Court of Appeals Prosecutor's Office filed a case to close down AK in what Turkish observers say was, in part, a last-minute attempt by the State to undercut the party at the ballot box. If past practice is any guide (ref B and previous), Ozkok's charge that Gul is "encouraging" Islamic reactionaries will eventually be featured as evidence against the Party. Although Ozkok implied that Gul acted illegally, the P.M. in fact operated within his formal purview by registering his objections to the military's expulsion policy. Nevertheless, whether or not Kemalist strictures are, in fact, "legal" has not traditionally prevented them from being used against elected civilians.  
PEARSON